

Facing Up to the Trust Deficit: The Key to an Enhanced U.S.–Pakistan Defense Relationship

Strategic Insights, Volume VI, Issue 4 (June 2007)

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Strategic Insights is a bi-monthly electronic journal produced by the [Center for Contemporary Conflict](#) at the [Naval Postgraduate School](#) in Monterey, California. The views expressed here are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of NPS, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

Introduction

In the five and a half years since the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington forced the military government of General Pervez Musharraf to undertake a sudden, drastic reordering of its foreign policy orientation, the U.S.–Pakistan defense relationship has grown to a level—not just in monetary terms, but in daily military-to-military interaction—never before attained in its 52 year history. But the U.S.–Pakistan political relationship, despite positive rhetoric on both sides, has not followed suit. Given a stark choice of being "with us or against us," and thus with the very survival of the state in the balance, Pakistan was forced to repudiate its strong support of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, curtail support to militant's operating in Indian-held Kashmir, and become a *de facto* military ally of the United States in its Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Not unnaturally given the amount of duress under which it was obtained, doubts have grown over time in Washington about the sincerity of Islamabad's commitment to GWOT goals, and, more specifically, concern about the role of its intelligence services in providing covert support and sanctuary to Al Qaida and Taliban remnants on both sides of the Durand Line.

One way to ameliorate many of these concerns and promote mutual confidence in the bilateral relationship might be to build on success and find ways to further advance an already robust defense relationship. But while it is relatively easy to identify ways to enhance various components of this relationship, it is a far more difficult task to solve the most fundamental impediment to a truly *enhanced* defense relationship, the corrosive and pernicious "trust deficit" on both sides that has always poisoned U.S.–Pakistan relations and continues to jeopardize our agreed strategic objectives.^[1]

Is addressing the trust issue really necessary? Might not the attempt lead to even more friction? Some in Pakistan's military establishment, and a large number of senior U.S. military leaders as well, often take a sentimental view and boast that the defense relationship has always served as a useful moderating function and communications backchannel whenever political relations have been frosty. Even in the worst of times, they say, for example in the mid-1990s when formal military-to-military relations were all but severed, the two militaries continued to cooperate in UN peacekeeping missions, exchanged small numbers of students in military schools, and received each others' senior defense officials warmly. Unfortunately, an unintended consequence of this process may have been to mask the seriousness of divisive issues. No defense relationship, however warm it may be at the personal level, exists in a vacuum. Therefore, the key to

enhancing defense relations must lie in identifying a strategy to alleviate—or at least manage—the “trust deficit” that has always existed as an unspoken part of the larger political relationship.

The purpose of this article is to provide a snapshot of the current state of the Pakistan–U.S. defense relationship, identify the historical causes and current manifestation of the “trust deficit,” suggest ways both sides might begin to address it, and, offer a number of modest proposals to enhance the present level of military-to-military interaction.

The Present Defense Relationship

In a joint statement made on 4 March 2006 Presidents Bush and Musharraf:

...affirmed the long-term, strategic partnership between their two countries. In 2004, the United States acknowledged its aspirations for closer bilateral ties with Pakistan by designating Pakistan as a Major Non-NATO Ally. The U.S.–Pakistan strategic partnership is based on the shared interests of the United States and Pakistan in building stable and sustainable democracy and in promoting peace and security, stability, prosperity, and democracy in South Asia and across the globe. The two leaders are determined to strengthen the foundation for a strong, stable, and enduring relationship.[2]

An accompanying Defense Department statement noted that, “The defense relationship between the United States and Pakistan is a critical element of the War on Terror, and a key component of the security and stability of South Asia,” and reiterated the desire for a long-term relationship with Pakistan.[3]

By any objective measure, the present defense relationship is as robust as at any time in the past. Between 1954 and 2002, the United States provided Pakistan a total of \$12.6 billion in economic and military assistance.[4] Since 9/11, the United States has provided \$4.422 billion in economic and military assistance to Pakistan, but when \$4.586 billion in reimbursement for Pakistan’s military contribution to Operation Enduring Freedom is added, the total amount of direct U.S. Treasury outlay to the Government of Pakistan in 2002-2007 amounts to \$9.008 billion.[5] Fully \$6.393 billion of this amount is directly or indirectly related to Pakistani military programs.[6]

The United States has made available to Pakistan a wide variety of top-of-the-line military equipment hitherto considered politically sensitive. Air force systems delivered or in the pipeline include 36 F-16 C/D block 50/52 fighter aircraft, the most modern version currently flown by the U.S. Air Force; a program to modernize all 34 of Pakistan’s existing F-16 fleet to the same standard; 500 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM)—the largest single international AMRAAM purchase in the history of the program; 200 AIM-9M Sidewinder missiles; and six C-130E transport aircraft. Navy systems delivered or in the pipeline include eight P-3C Orion maritime surveillance aircraft; a program to modernize Pakistan’s existing P-3 fleet; Harpoon block 2 missiles, and three additional P-3 aircraft that will be configured with the E-2C HAWKEYE airborne early warning electronics suite. Army equipment delivered or in the pipeline includes 26 Bell 412 helicopters; 20 AH-1F Cobra attack helicopters and modernization of Pakistan’s existing Cobra fleet, Harris high frequency radios, TOW-2A anti-tank missiles, and 115 M-109A5 howitzers.[7] To manage these programs the embassy security assistance office, the Office of the Defense Representative, Pakistan (ODRP) has expanded from a small office of four officers and three foreign nationals headed by a colonel in 2001, to a complex organization of approximately 40 military personnel headed by a major general, the first time since the 1960s that an officer in that grade has been posted in Pakistan.

The number and scope of current military-to-military interactions is equally impressive. After a twelve-year interruption, International Military Education and Training (IMET) was resumed in 2002. In FY2006, 124 Pakistani students attended 167 military courses in U.S. professional

military educational institutions. An additional 56 officers attended courses conducted under the provisions of the Counter-Terrorism Fellowship program. Last year, the inaugural session of the U.S.–Pakistan Colonel's Program brought together a tri-service group of ten Pakistani officers and a like number of U.S. counterparts at the U.S. Joint Forces Staff College for a ten-day program of joint staff and operations training. A similar program is being considered this year for joint doctrinal development to be hosted by the U.S. Joint Forces Command and the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. Although Pakistan is in the U.S. Central Command area of operations, largely for reasons related to its turbulent history with India, it participates regularly in two programs sponsored by the U.S. Pacific Command: the Pacific Armies Management Seminar and the Pacific Armies Chiefs of Staff Conference. The first program brings together senior grade officers annually to meet and exchange views; the second program provides an opportunity for the U.S. Army Chief of Staff to meet periodically with his Pakistani counterpart.

A new element in the defense relationship is a high level of day-to-day cooperation in the global war on terrorism (GWOT). Although informal mechanisms to coordinate military operations associated with Operation Enduring Freedom were established in late September 2001 and expanded periodically thereafter, they were formally recognized in October 2005 in a Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement.^[8] At U.S. Central Command headquarters in Florida, Pakistan maintains a five-man liaison team headed by a brigadier who also is a member of the J5 Coalition Planning Group. Similarly in Pakistan, as part of ODRP, a liaison cell exists to coordinate operational issues between the U.S.-led Combined Forces Command—Afghanistan and Pakistan's Army General Headquarters and Joint Staff Headquarters. These liaison elements also assist in managing the bilateral joint exercise program. In FY2006 that program consisted of four major exercises, typically one each quarter, and three special operations joint/combined exercises. In 2006, Pakistan became the first regional country to command CTF-150, the 14-15 ship combined naval task force that patrols the waterways of the Middle East from the Gulf of Oman to the southern border of Kenya, including the Red Sea.^[9]

Another new liaison vehicle is the Tripartite Commission that brings together senior officers from Pakistan, Afghanistan, the United States, and NATO/ISAF every six-to-eight weeks to discuss operational and intelligence issues along the Durand Line. The commission has three ongoing working groups that report on issues of mutual concern to each plenary meeting: the Border Security Sub Committee, the Military Intelligence Sharing Working Group, and the Counter-IED Working Group. At the 20th plenary meeting in Islamabad in January 2007, the sides were represented by General Bismillah Khan, Chief of General Staff of the Afghan National Army, General Ahsen Saleem Hayat, Vice Chief of Army Staff of the Pakistan Army, General David Richards, Commander of NATO/ISAF, and Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry, then the Commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan.^[10]

Yet despite the present high level of cooperation, the 52-year U.S.–Pakistan defense relationship resembles nothing so much as a roller coaster ride with remarkable highs interspersed with dizzying drops. Dennis Kux has described the relationship as an ongoing play in eight acts with the ninth act yet to be written. Four of these acts have been low points and four have been relatively high points, including the present one. But a common thread interwoven from era to era is a high level of mutual mistrust and misunderstanding about motives and expectations.^[11]

Historical Background

As the weaker of the two states emerging from the partition of British India in 1947, Pakistan almost immediately sought assistance from the United States to build a military establishment capable of protecting the fragile state from its larger and more powerful neighbor, India. Soon after independence, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the state's founder and first Governor-General, told photographer Margaret Bourke-White, "America needs Pakistan more than Pakistan needs America....Pakistan is the pivot of the world, as we are placed... (on) the frontier on which the future position of the world revolves."^[12] The United States was approached for military

assistance in October-November 1947 and again in 1948, but the Truman administration, busy with weightier matters in Europe and the Far East and leery of involving itself in the ongoing Kashmir dispute, was unreceptive.[13]

Truman's successor, Dwight Eisenhower, was more favorably inclined to embrace Pakistan. Continuing the Truman strategy of containment of the Soviet Union, his administration embarked on an aggressive policy of recruiting client states in a chain of regional alliances along the southern borders of the Soviet Union. On 19 May 1954, The United States and Pakistan signed a *mutual defense assistance agreement* and eventually became partners in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and the Baghdad Pact (later named Central Treaty Organization).[14] The ink had scarcely dried on this document before friction began. The State Department had not bothered to consult with the Defense Department before signing the agreement and the first head of the newly established U.S. Military Advisory Group arrived in Karachi unable to guarantee more than a \$30 million defense program. As one scholar explained, "A gaping chasm existed between the free-flowing dollars that the Pakistan military officers and bureaucrats conjured as their just reward for open alignment with the West and the modest dollar figure contemplated by Washington planners." [15] The Pakistan Army high command was understandably disillusioned. Trying to make amends, the first year allotment was raised to \$50 million and the United States ultimately agreed to a program to equip four infantry divisions, one and a half armored divisions, six air force squadrons, and twelve naval vessels at an estimated cost of \$171 million.[16]

Although the United States quickly began to make good on this commitment, other doubts soon grew on both sides. Pentagon planners realized that equipping a force of this size would cost far more than the original estimate and strove to contain costs by providing obsolete equipment and few spare parts to keep it operational.[17] Political doubts grew as well. According to Hasan-Askari Rizvi:

Pakistan and the U.S. did not fully share each other's goals. The U.S. was pursuing its global security agenda against the Soviet Union. Pakistan was concerned about the regional security environment and its major security preoccupation was with India. The containment of Communism was not a priority for Pakistan....The divergence in their perspectives and goals produced strains in their relations soon after the beginning of the pact era. Pakistan developed doubts about the reliability of the American commitments as early as 1956....However, the two sides neither endeavored to harmonize their divergent perspectives nor attempted to clarify ambiguities in their relations. They played down their differences and continued to cooperate with each other for different reasons.[18]

Pakistan's single-minded focus on India was another reason for disenchantment. The Eisenhower administration initially viewed India's foreign policy of nonalignment as immoral, but took a different approach as it matured in office. By the end of the decade, India, which routinely castigated the United States in the UN and other international fora, had become a major recipient of U.S. economic aid. To Pakistan, it seemed that its foe was deriving all the benefits of an alliance with the United States without being required to shoulder any of the responsibilities.[19] Washington likewise was becoming disillusioned with its new ally. In a December 1957 communication to the State Department, U.S. Ambassador James Langley wrote, "I wonder if we have not developed certain generalizations about Pakistan and then proceeded to accept them as gospel truth without sufficient periodic scrutiny... (It is) not too difficult to make a rather convincing case that the present military program is based on a hoax, the hoax being that it is related to the Soviet Union." [20]

Despite these early manifestations of the trust deficit, sheer momentum drove the new relationship forward. Initially skeptical of the alliance, by 1958 the Pentagon had become a staunch advocate for Pakistan. Senior U.S. officers quickly developed close personal relationships with their Pakistani counterparts and took much more seriously than the State

Department the role Pakistan might play in regional alliances.[21] With massive deliveries of military equipment proceeding apace, American trainers and engineers built a huge new cantonment at Kharian for the armored units being formed, trained the new force in U.S. doctrine, and created a special operations capability for the Army. The supersonic F-104 fighter jet, the F-16 of its day, was released to Pakistan, the first non-NATO state to receive it. A second mutual security agreement was signed on 5 March 1959. This was also an executive order and not a treaty. Although it called for the United States to come to Pakistan's aid in case of aggression, reference was made to a 1957 Joint Congressional Resolution on the Middle East. The U.S. interpretation was that it was limited solely to instances of Communist aggression and thus did not constitute a commitment to come to Pakistan's aid in case of an attack from India. But Kux notes "a layperson might well have misread the text as offering a more open-ended pledge of American aid." [22] A subsequent agreement in July 1959 permitted the use of facilities in Peshawar for intelligence gathering and for U2 flights into Soviet airspace.

This house of cards so painstakingly built on both sides finally came crashing down during the 1965 war with India. The Kennedy administration and its hard-charging ambassador in New Delhi, John Kenneth Galbraith, were infatuated with India, less so with Pakistan. [23] Kennedy's decision to provide military aid to India during the Sino-Indian war in 1962 without bothering to consult Pakistan beforehand infuriated Field Marshal Ayub and once again called into question the reliability of U.S. security guarantees. To contain the damage, U.S. Ambassador Walter McCaughy was ordered to deliver an *aide-memoire* on 5 November 1962 stating, "The Government of the United States reaffirms its previous assurances to the Government of Pakistan that it will come to Pakistan's assistance in the event of aggression from India." Ayub was mollified, but greatly disappointed when a later, much watered down public statement seemed only to mirror a similar statement made to India in 1954 when military aid to Pakistan was first disclosed. [24] Pakistan then infuriated the United States by opening negotiations with China on settling the border between the two states and taking steps to improve relations with the Soviet Union. As a way to indicate his displeasure, Ayub's official visit to Washington in April 1965 was cancelled on short notice by President Lyndon Johnson.

The events surrounding the run-up to the 1965 war with India are well known and need not be addressed here. When India attacked across the international border on 6 September 1965, Pakistan claimed it was the victim of naked aggression and demanded the United States abide by its 1959 mutual defense agreement and November 1962 *aide-memoire* and immediately come to its aid. Washington viewed the situation differently. Johnson considered Pakistan the aggressor for having undertaken Operation Gibraltar, an earlier, large scale infiltration of Pakistani soldiers into the disputed Kashmir territory. When the United States suspended economic and military aid to both India and Pakistan and strongly supported a UN-brokered ceasefire, General Muhammad Musa, Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, in a tense meeting with U.S. military assistance chief Major General Robert Burns, condemned the United States for its perfidy and noted that his country had "burned her bridges" by accepting U.S. aid and was now paying the price." Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto put it more bluntly, threatening that Pakistan's relations with every country "would depend on attitude they took in the present crisis." [25]

The 1965 arms embargo would remain in effect for a decade with only spare parts permitted to be transferred. Pakistan soon began to look elsewhere for its defense needs. If Pakistan felt betrayed, however, Washington was equally upset. Pakistan's newfound diplomatic coziness with China, still a pariah state in U.S. eyes, Russia's entrance onto the South Asia scene at Tashkent in 1966, and its reluctance to fulfill SEATO obligations in the Vietnam War seemed to make a mockery of its professed anti-Communist stance. If not quite a divorce, there was now certainly a trial separation between the two quarreling allies. The defense relationship continued, albeit at a much lower level. Pakistani and U.S. students continued to take courses in each others' military schools, Pakistan remained a member of the two regional pacts, and enough U.S. spares were being provided to keep the Pakistan Army and Air Force operational. Nevertheless, Pakistan

began to diversify its defense purchases, purchasing trucks from the Soviet Union and tanks and aircraft from China.

Relations continued to deteriorate throughout the 1970s despite a brief up tick following the well known Nixon-Kissinger "tilt" toward Pakistan in the 1971 war with India. This move was largely prompted by Nixon's gratitude to Pakistan for its help in arranging the U.S. diplomatic opening to China. Such diplomacy went largely unappreciated, however, as Pakistanis saw their country forcibly divided by India, the clear aggressor, despite a mutual defense agreement with the United States. It seemed another clear case of American betrayal. Still, with the Pakistan Army militarily defeated and 90,000 of its soldiers in Indian prison camps, Pakistan's new leader, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had little choice but to ask for economic and military assistance for his suddenly shrunken and weakened state. In February 1972 he went so far as to offer access to naval bases along the Makran Coast of Balochistan, but was politely rebuffed.^[26] The Ford Administration finally lifted the 1965 arms embargo in February 1975 but limited sales to defensive weapon systems only. When the Carter administration came to power in 1976, it was committed to a foreign policy of promoting democracy, human rights, and curbing the spread of nuclear weapons. For Pakistan, now being ruled under martial law following a coup against Bhutto in 1977 and desperately trying to match India's nuclear program, this amounted to three strikes all at once. Total U.S. assistance during the Bhutto years (1972-1977) was only \$937.3 in economic assistance and a paltry \$1.7 million in military aid, and there seemed no reason to expect more.^[27]

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 once again made Pakistan a frontline state in the Cold War. Because General Zia already had decided to provide covert aid to Afghans opposed to the Soviet Union, it seemed for the first time in years that U.S. and Pakistani strategic objectives were congruent. Jimmy Carter laid aside concerns about Pakistan's style of governance and its nuclear program and reaffirmed the 1959 mutual defense agreement committing the United States to defend Pakistan from Communist aggression. He offered Pakistan a military aid package of \$400 million that was quickly dismissed by Zia as "peanuts." It would be left to the Reagan administration to resurrect the defense relationship.

Seeing an opportunity to enmesh the Soviet Union in its own Vietnam-style quagmire, Reagan lost little time in dramatically upping the ante, offering a five-year \$3.2 billion program equally divided between military and economic aid. Warned by Foreign Minister Agha Shahi that Pakistan would not compromise on its fledgling nuclear program, Secretary of State Alexander Haig replied that the nuclear issue need not become the centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy so long as Pakistan did not detonate a bomb. Shahi later stated, "I believe we have moved forward in developing a Pakistan-American friendship on a durable basis.... The previous Carter administration offer did not carry for us credibility... commensurate... with what we considered to be the magnitude of the threat."^[28] Pakistan spent its new military largesse on big ticket, high technology weapon systems to modernize its armed forces: tanks and self-propelled artillery for the Army, leased U.S. ships and maritime surveillance aircraft for the Navy, and a fleet of 40 F-16 A/B fighter aircraft that became the most visible symbol of the new bilateral military relationship. In 1986, a follow-on \$4.02 billion five-year program was inked. Although the bulk of this program was never delivered for reasons that will be discussed below, U.S. assistance during the Zia years still amounted to \$1.7 billion for military and \$2.5 billion for economic programs.^[29]

It must be stressed that the defense relationship during the 1980s was largely centered on the delivery of weapon systems, Pakistani students attending U.S. military schools, and high level military visitors going back and forth to each other's capitals. There was little direct military cooperation between the two sides because U.S. aid to the Afghan insurgency was provided solely through covert channels set up and operated by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISID).^[30] Though outwardly correct and courteous, there was much less of the warmth and openness that characterized the 1950s and early 1960s era, and U.S. military personnel in Pakistan generally were closely monitored by an ever-vigilant Military Intelligence Directorate.

But however little the Reagan White House cared about Pakistan's nuclear program, the U.S. Congress cared a great deal. Concerned about its rapid progress and what it considered to be outright duplicitous behavior by the Zia government, Congress passed in 1985 a piece of legislation, popularly known as the Pressler Amendment, requiring the administration to certify annually that Pakistan did not have a nuclear device and that U.S. aid was advancing nonproliferation goals. Despite the fact it was country-specific, Pakistan made no objection to the Pressler Amendment at the time—officials at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington reportedly had even been allowed a degree of input during the initial drafting of the legislation—because it averted even more damaging legislation and permitted economic and military aid to continue unimpeded.

By the end of the decade, the regional dynamic changed once again. Zia died in a still-mysterious plane crash in 1988 and the last Soviet soldier departed Afghanistan in 1989. With the collapse of the Soviet Union soon afterward, Washington's focus was diverted elsewhere. Nuclear proliferation again became the major U.S. concern in South Asia and on 1 October 1990, the annual Pressler Amendment deadline, the Bush administration failed to certify that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device. A \$594 million defense program planned for FY1991 was put on indefinite hold, Pakistani students attending U.S. military courses were allowed to finish their courses but no new students were permitted, weapon systems shipped to the United States for repairs or upgrades were frozen in place, and new economic aid was terminated although goods and services in the pipeline were allowed to continue. In one day, with one blow, the defense relationship was all but terminated.

The damage to Pakistan's armed forces was immediate and substantial, and would become worse as systems aged and repair parts grew scarce. The Pakistan Navy P-3 fleet quickly became non-operational. In 1994, their leases having expired, an entire squadron of naval frigates sailed off to Singapore to be scrapped. A follow-on purchase of 28 F-16 aircraft—the very symbol of the relationship—was caught up in the sanctions. Following U.S. advice, Pakistan continued to pay for the aircraft although as each one was manufactured, it was shipped immediately to a desert base for storage at Pakistan's expense. Most significantly, an entire generation of young Pakistani officers was denied the opportunity to study in U.S. military schools and become acquainted with American values and society. Pakistan was left largely on its own to deal with the aftermath of the successful Afghan jihad. With three million Afghan refugees still on its soil, the country awash in arms and ammunition, and Afghanistan embroiled in civil war many Pakistanis blamed a subsequent rise of Islamic radicalism and erosion of domestic law and order on the precipitous U.S. withdrawal from the region. Most considered it the third instance of betrayal.^[31]

For the next five years, the defense relationship consisted of one or two U.S. students attending the Pakistan Army Command and Staff College, inventories of military equipment already delivered, and an occasional commercial purchase of non-lethal items. The Pentagon was unhappy with this state of affairs and made an effort to ameliorate parts of the sanctions regime. This was partly due to nostalgia for the past relationship, gratitude for Pakistan's role in the collapse of the Soviet Union, a rescue by Pakistani UN peacekeepers of American soldiers during the "Blackhawk Down" incident in Somalia in 1993, Pakistani participation in a 1994 UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, and cooperation in capturing and extraditing Ramzi Yusef, the notorious terrorist responsible for a 1993 bombing at the World Trade Center. Returning from a January 1995 visit to Pakistan, Secretary of Defense William Perry declared the Pressler sanctions to be a "blunt instrument" that neither advanced U.S. counterproliferation goals nor increased its influence with Pakistan.^[32] During his visit, Perry proposed and Pakistan accepted rekindling the U.S.–Pakistan Consultative Group, a forum to address bilateral military issues, and allowed a few Pakistani military students to study in the United States on an exchange basis. Later that year, Senator Hank Brown offered an amendment to the foreign assistance act that maintained most Pressler restrictions, but permitted economic assistance, Ex-Im Bank and Overseas Private Investment Corporation loan guarantees, and the release of embargoed military

equipment except for the F-16s. The Clinton administration later worked out a deal to sell the F-16s and fully reimburse Pakistan with a combination of the proceeds and foodstuffs.

Despite these modest improvements, U.S. and Pakistani strategic goals continued to diverge during the 1990s. India remained Pakistan's main focus and the ISID, with the Afghan *jihad* as its model, exploited a 1989 uprising by Kashmiris alienated by years of Indian meddling in their affairs, and began covertly arming and training *mujahideen* from a variety of militant organizations and facilitating their infiltration into Indian-occupied Kashmir. In 1993, Pakistan escaped by a whisker being placed on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. Pakistan's nuclear program continued apace, and the May 1998 Indian nuclear test was matched within a few weeks, with both states becoming the object of U.S. nuclear nonproliferation sanction. In 1995 Pakistan became one of only three states to recognize the odious Taliban regime in Afghanistan and, when a shadowy terrorist group called al-Qaeda moved its base of operations to Afghanistan and launched a series of attacks on U.S. embassies in Africa, the United States responded by firing cruise missiles over Pakistani airspace in retaliation. To make matters worse, in October 1999, General Pervez Musharraf overthrew a democratically elected government, triggering another category of U.S. sanctions and bringing the total number to seven.^[33] But with most of its defense needs now being met by China, Ukraine, France, Spain, and others, Pakistan now had little need of a defense relationship with the United States. By 2001, the divorce seemed complete.

The Trust Deficit Today

During a recent visit to Pakistan, I asked a retired senior officer why the United States should trust Pakistan in view of its previous history of outright deception on issues like WMD development, the A.Q. Khan nuclear proliferation network, previous support for the Taliban government in Afghanistan, and aid to Kashmiri militants along the LOC. He simply smiled and replied that trust is a two way street. "Why should Pakistan trust you?" he asked rhetorically. While acknowledging the large number of joint exercises and senior leader visits between the two countries, he characterized the current defense relationship as "tenuous" due to the "wobbly status of the U.S. in the region." In the early days of the relationship in the 1950s and 1960s, he continued, Americans used to be simpler and more straightforward. They were viewed as benign and helpful. "But now our people no longer view the U.S. as a benign power." Many Pakistanis are now using the crude image of a condom to describe the relationship—Pakistan will be used for the business at hand and be cast off immediately when the business is concluded. As far as enhancing the present military relationship, "The Pakistanis are probably trying to get what they can...Anyone wishing to enhance the relationship with the U.S. will lose support in Pakistan."^[34]

In addition to the heavy historical burden it already bears in Pakistan, the United States' image is under heavy attack for reasons related to its conduct of the GWOT and its relations with the Muslim world. Suspicion of its culpability in two missile attacks against al-Qaeda targets in Bajaur Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), collateral damage to Afghan civilians during military operations, the war in Iraq, and unstinting support for Israel in the Middle East peace process all contribute to a negative view of the United States. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Project, the favorability rating of the United States in Pakistan is only 27 percent.^[35] And even this may be too optimistic. A Western diplomat in Islamabad stated that a methodologically sound public opinion poll commissioned by his embassy recently tabulated the response of 1000 Pakistani citizens and found only a four percent favorability index for the United States.^[36]

Pakistani Doubts About the United States

Historical baggage and U.S. unpopularity in the Islamic world serve as background and context, not as a complete explanation for the current manifestation of the trust deficit. For Pakistan, the

deficit is growing and accelerating largely because of four concerns: (1) fear the United States will leave Afghanistan prematurely and in chaos; (2) publicly aired criticism by senior U.S. officials about its poor performance in the GWOT; (3) the U.S.–India strategic relationship; (4) and fear the United States will return to a coercive certification-sanctions regime.

The 2001 military campaign to overturn the Taliban government and destroy al-Qaeda appeared to mark a decisive turning point in U.S. policy toward South Asia. Acknowledging that its post-1989 withdrawal from the region was a mistake, U.S. policymakers have repeatedly emphasized that “South Asia is now a central focus of U.S. foreign policy... (and) increasingly vital to our core foreign policy interests,” and pledge to build and sustain a long-term relationship with Pakistan.^[37] However, to many Pakistanis, recent events make that commitment sound hollow. A former senior U.S. military officer recently acknowledged that a 2005 announcement that the United States would draw down the size of its force in Afghanistan when NATO forces assumed operational responsibility for southern Afghanistan in the summer of 2006 put “fear and uncertainty” in the minds of both Pakistan and Afghanistan about the long-term commitment of the United States in the region “and hope in the minds of the Taliban.”^[38] Subsequently, the stinging political defeat suffered by the Bush administration in the November 2006 midterm election, the growing unpopularity of the war in Iraq, and increasingly vocal calls by prominent U.S. politicians for benchmarks or even a deadline to withdraw U.S. troops from that theater of operations creates doubt about the durability of the commitment to Afghanistan. This, in turn, rekindles fear that for a second time the United States will abruptly depart the region with Afghanistan in chaos and once again will leave Pakistan, now with potentially hostile regimes to its east, west, and southwest, to pick up the pieces.

Stung by repeated criticism from Afghan President Hamid Karzai that Pakistan is providing covert support to Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan and trying to destabilize his government, Pakistani officials become positively apoplectic when similar accusations are aired by senior U.S. officials. For example, in Kabul following a May 2006 visit in which he praised Pakistan for its contribution to the GWOT, State Department Counter-Terrorism Coordinator Henry Crumpton claimed that, “Not only al Qaeda, but Taliban leadership are primarily in Pakistan, and the Pakistanis know that,” then went on to say Pakistan was still not doing enough to deny Taliban forces sanctuary in Pakistani border areas.^[39] More recently, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte, openly claimed al-Qaeda and Taliban networks are presently operating from safe havens on Pakistani soil.^[40]

Equally upsetting to Pakistani military officers are similar remarks made by their U.S. military counterparts. Last October then-Supreme Allied Commander for Europe, General James Jones, stated to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee it is “generally accepted” that the Taliban is headquartered in or around the Pakistani city of Quetta. More recently, following an engagement near the Pakistan border on 10-11 January 2007 in which U.S. forces killed 130 fighters, Major General Benjamin Freakley told the press, “There’s (sic) Taliban leaders in Pakistan. We...believe, though we don’t know exactly where, that Jalaluddin Haqqani is operating from inside Pakistan and sending men to fight in Afghanistan.... Pakistan’s army does not have proper knowledge about who is operating from where.”^[41] While Pakistani diplomats tend to reply more temperately, a far more typical response is voiced by Lieutenant General (ret) Ali Jan Aurakzai, Governor of Northwest Frontier Province, and a former commander of 11 Corps in Peshawar:

We are doing far more than the whole coalition put together. Pakistan had 80,000 troops in border areas—more than twice as many as NATO—and had lost about 750 soldiers, more than the entire coalition. It pains me to hear people accusing us of allowing border crossing. We’re physically manning the border—our troops are sitting there on the zero line . . . Damn it, you also have a responsibility. Go sit on the border, fight like soldiers instead of sitting in your bases. The Americans say they can see even a goat on a hillside with their electronic surveillance, so why don’t they tell us where crossings are taking

place and we will plug those gaps and kill those people? Either they [NATO] are trying to hide their own weaknesses by leveling allegations at Pakistan or they are refusing to admit the facts.... Why did the coalition come to Afghanistan? To find al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden, Mullah Omar and the Taliban; for democracy, reconstruction and development, and [to] leave a stable Afghanistan which wouldn't be vulnerable to terrorists. All very noble, but tell me which one of those objectives have been achieved? I went to Kabul in September and they are all living in a big bunker with no control over Afghanistan. There's no law and order. The insurgency has become far worse... is that a success?[42]

The dramatic post-9/11 improvement in Pakistan's defense and political relations with the United States initially tended to mute criticism of Washington's embryonic strategic relationship with New Delhi. However, the March 2006 announcement of a deal to provide U.S. technology and fuel to India's civilian nuclear power program, but not to require India to join the NPT or even place all its nuclear reactors under international safeguards, once again rekindled doubt about U.S. strategic objectives in the region. The announcement was even more humiliating, coming as it did without consultation prior to an official visit by President Bush to Islamabad, when the United States refused to offer a similar deal to Pakistan. Pakistanis, like many U.S. critics, believe the deal undercuts global nuclear nonproliferation goals and regional stability, and emboldens North Korea and Iran to pursue their own nuclear programs. No longer content to accept U.S. assertions that the traditional zero-sum game model of U.S. relations with India and Pakistan no longer applied in a post 9/11 world, a retired Pakistani diplomat recently admitted, "The reality is that nothing happens in the subcontinent that is anything else but a zero-sum game." [43] Pakistani military officers are also suspicious about the future of the U.S.-India strategic relationship and fear U.S. sales of high technology weapons systems to India will ultimately erode the present conventional military balance between the two sides. Besides, they say, India is using Afghanistan as a launching pad for covert efforts to destabilize the province of Balochistan and this could not possibly be done without the knowledge if not outright cooperation of the United States. [44]

Finally, recent legislation passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, Section 1442 of H.R. 1, Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007 is another major concern. If passed in its present form by the Senate and signed by President Bush this legislation will resurrect the hateful certification process, this time by requiring the administration to certify that Pakistan is preventing the Taliban from operating in areas under its sovereign control, and by cooperating in a variety of nuclear nonproliferation measures, including, possibly, the surrender of the revered Dr. A.Q. Khan to the United States for interrogation. [45] "This is a very serious development," said Brigadier (ret) Naeem Salik, a visiting fellow at Washington's Brookings Institution, "It is another Pressler in the making." [46] Other Pakistani critics are harsher:

The U.S. intent towards Pakistan has now become completely unambiguous and it is a threatening and hostile design the United States is unfurling in the context of its frontline ally in the war on terror... Now the U.S. has effectively moved to threaten Pakistan directly. In the second week of January, the Democrats in the House of Representatives put forward a bill providing recommendations for the implementation of the recommendations presented by the 9/11 Commission. Without following procedural niceties, the bill was passed by the House on January 12. The section on Pakistan (1442) effectively takes Pakistan-U.S. relations back to the Pressler days with limitations placed on U.S. security assistance to Pakistan, which would now require a Presidential waiver or certification.... The point is that by now we should accept that the U.S. intent towards us is threatening and overall negative. [47]

U.S. Doubts About Pakistan

For most of the post 9/11 period, U.S. policy makers considered Afghanistan a major success story and gave much credit to Pakistan for the brevity of the coalition military campaign and

relative ease in which the Taliban government was overthrown and replaced by the democratically elected Karzai government. By the spring of 2005, senior military officers in Afghanistan considered the Taliban movement to be decisively defeated. Since then, as the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated precipitously and Taliban strength recovered, U.S. attention is increasingly focused on three elements of doubt: the role of the ISID in Afghanistan, the use of Pakistani territory as a sanctuary by Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants, and the amount of local support in Pakistan flowing across the Durand Line to these remnants.[\[48\]](#)

Part of the doubt about Pakistan's motives in Afghanistan may be explained by the close and continuous interaction U.S. forces operating in Afghanistan have with former Northern Alliance elements in the Karzai government that have traditionally been hostile to Pakistan. Reports of ISID support to the Taliban and al-Qaeda are reminiscent of pre 9/11 reporting from Northern Alliance sources that regular Pakistan Army units were operating alongside the Taliban in armed engagements against them, allegations later proven to be false. But other doubts remain. U.S. officials laud Pakistan's record in capturing al-Qaeda and "foreign" fighters in the FATA and elsewhere in Pakistan, but do not see the same level of commitment to capturing Afghan Taliban or "local" (Pakistani) Taliban fighters. They consider it completely disingenuous for President Musharraf to state that identifying these elements in Quetta or elsewhere in Pakistan is difficult because of physical, cultural, and linguistic similarities to the Pakistan population given the apparent ease with which female American reporters are able to find and interview them.[\[49\]](#) Their worry that a controversial agreement signed in North Waziristan in September 2006 between the Pakistan government and tribal leaders and "local Taliban" would lead to a diminished Pakistan Army effort in FATA and a simultaneous increase in cross-border operations directed against U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan has largely been borne out. And there is a growing awareness on the American side of, and need for an explanation for, the absence of any significant Pakistani military forces deployed north of the Khyber Pass, an area long suspected to be the hiding place of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Osama bin Ladin, and other high value targets.

Doubts on Afghanistan in turn fuel doubts about Pakistani credibility in other areas. Despite improved Pakistani relations with India, U.S. officials are well aware that Pakistan has never completely dismantled the Kashmiri *jehadi* infrastructure built by the ISID in the 1990s despite pledges by General Musharraf to do so in January 2002 and June 2002. Instead, the government seems to have merely ordered these groups to stand down, maintain a low profile, and remain ready, presumably in case the peace process takes a negative course and they are once again needed as a tool to pressure India. Several banned organizations have reopened or are operating under a new name, and many played a prominent play in the relief effort following the October 2005 earthquake. Given their past history and radical Islamic orientation, it is a legitimate question to ask if there is a nexus between them and similar radical elements operating in the FATA.

Finally, as the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs move forward, U.S. doubts continue to grow about the level of past Pakistani assistance to both states. Many officials openly wonder whether the entire story of the Dr. A.Q. Khan's nuclear proliferation network has been revealed and believe that the persistent refusal to make him available for further questioning is *prima facie* evidence Pakistan has something more to hide.

The Way Forward

How, in this atmosphere of mutual mistrust and doubt, can defense relations possibly be enhanced? I have stated elsewhere in this paper that a defense relationship cannot exist in a vacuum. To be healed, the current trust deficit must be addressed concurrently within the construct of the larger bilateral political relationship. But perhaps by attempting to move the defense relationship forward, many elements of doubt and mistrust can be tackled head on and, if not resolved, at least be highlighted to policymakers. Although both sides will be required to work

hard to overcome the trust deficit, the onus will likely be on the United States to take the first steps. These could include:

1. Implementing a Strategic Dialogue

The prerequisite to any enhancement of the defense relationship is a *genuine* strategic dialogue to address the trust issue and other mutual concerns. Almost a year ago, during the Bush visit to Pakistan, both sides agreed to such a vehicle under the Strategic Partnership process that would meet regularly to review issues of mutual interest, and designated the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and Pakistan's Foreign Secretary to be co-chairs.^[50] Although one meeting was held in 2006, little came of it and the 2007 meeting has been repeatedly delayed, but the process could be enormously valuable if meetings were conducted on a regular basis, addressed a wide variety of contentious areas, was monitored continuously at a high level, and not allowed to become a perfunctory diplomatic exercise. A valuable first step in creating the proper atmosphere for such a dialogue should be to declare a moratorium on the practice of airing doubts about Pakistan in public. Pakistan probably can and should be doing more to assist U.S. and NATO military operations in Afghanistan. But criticism of its action or inaction should be dealt with face to face behind closed doors, not in the media. It need not be expected that directly addressing contentious issues will always produce agreement or even progress in certain areas. It might even make the strategic dialogue a confrontational event. But at least it would be a good start in bringing trust deficit issues into the open and not allowing them to fester underneath a veil of silence.

The present U.S.–Pakistan Defense Consultative Group, an annual forum co-chaired by the U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and Pakistan's Defence Secretary to discuss bilateral defense issues could follow shortly thereafter as a natural adjunct. In the past, this forum has often served as little more than a high-level program management review of Pakistan's security assistance program, but it has the potential to become a far more useful vehicle for strategic engagement. Its three principal sub-groups, the Military Cooperation Committee, the Security Assistance Working Group, and the Counter-Terrorism Working Group, provide a mechanism where contentious issues raised at the political level in the Strategic Dialogue could be further addressed and refined at the military level.

Finally, the third component of a more effective strategic dialog architecture could be the Tripartite Commission. While it has been hugely effective as a political symbol of U.S.–Pakistan–Afghanistan cooperation on border issues, the Commission has not been effective in resolving the problems giving rise to the negative rhetoric on both sides of the border. However, with strong U.S. pressure on both Pakistan and Afghanistan, it has the potential to be more effective in such areas as clear demarcation of the Durand Line, monitoring of "legitimate" crossings by tribes whose territory straddles the line, establishing more effective military liaison channels between the numerous security forces and intelligence agencies operating along the line, and sharing near-real-time intelligence to facilitate military operations on both sides. Instead of high level plenary meetings every couple of months to review sub-committee work, the Commission might consider establishing a full time jointly staffed secretariat to closely monitor and report on the implementation of committee work and decisions made by the full plenary.

2. Investing Senior Leader Time in Relationship Building

The typical senior military visitor to Pakistan spends less than 24 hours on the ground, rarely travels outside Islamabad, and has time for no more than three or four one-hour calls on Pakistani counterparts before rushing off to India or Afghanistan. The calls typically are on the President, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Vice Chief of Army Staff, and perhaps the Director General ISID. If a visitor remains overnight, there will be one social function, usually a two-hour dinner hosted by one side or the other with a relatively small number of political, military, and business figures attending. During the brief official calls, because local culture dictates that

visitors are treated with respect and dignity, the Pakistani side generally tries to be as courteous and non-confrontational as possible and both sides normally stick to well anticipated talking points. American visitors often mistake such polite encounters for sincerity and believe, if they visit often enough, they have established a warm personal relationship with their counterpart and understand the Pakistani point of view. Nothing could be further from the truth, or more harmful to both sides' long-term understanding of each other. American visitors must stay longer, travel more widely, meet more Pakistanis, and invest real time in building genuine personal relationships with their counterparts.

A better model is the recent visit of General Benjamin S. Griffin, Commander U.S. Army Materiel Command. He stayed for three days, visited several ordnance depots, talked "nuts and bolts" logistics issues at every location, commented favorably on Pakistani "best practices" he observed along the way, and promised to send a staff officer from his headquarters to assist in developing solutions to specific problems raised during the visit. According to a senior U.S. embassy official, several Pakistani officers commented favorably about that visit and continue to inquire about the general's health and activities.[\[51\]](#) This kind of visit should be the goal and not the exception.

3. Demonstrating the Value of U.S. Relations

The deployment of 24 Chinook helicopters and two medical units to Pakistan following the October 2005 earthquake that devastated Azad Kashmir and parts of NWFP likely did more good for the United States' image in Pakistan than all the billions of dollars of aid money dispensed since 9/11. The United States should undertake a carefully coordinated effort to educate the average Pakistani about the size and scale of its economic and military assistance, and demonstrate its value in improving their lives. Despite the security threat, U.S. diplomats and senior visitors must find ways to end their self-imposed imprisonment in the U.S. Embassy compound and travel more widely to meet people, visit and inaugurate the many aid projects their countrymen's tax dollars are paying for, and generally become far more visible to average Pakistanis.

A more tangible way to do this might be through the National Guard State Partnership Program. This program was established in 1993 in response to the radically changed political-military situation following the collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It strives to achieve the following security cooperation objectives: improve military interoperability between the United States and the forces of partner nations, demonstrate military subordination to civil authority, demonstrate military support to civilian authorities, assist with the development of democratic institutions, foster open-market economies to help develop stability, and project and represent United States humanitarian values.[\[52\]](#) The Guard currently is partnered with 21 countries in the U.S. European Command area of responsibility, five countries in the U.S. Central Command area, 15 in the U.S. Southern Command region, and three countries in the U.S. Pacific Command area. The formal process to establish a partnership begins with a request submitted by the host nation to the U.S. ambassador in that country. The ambassador then formally requests the theater Combatant Commander who, in turn, requests the Chief, National Guard Bureau, to select a state for the partnership.

Another concept to consider is deploying U.S. Reserve Component or National Guard medical, engineer, or aviation units to Pakistan to perform their annual training requirement. While on a short duration deployment in Pakistan, they might conduct medical and dental clinics in remote areas, build roads and schools, fly medical evacuation missions into remote areas, and generally perform tasks that demonstrate the value of the United States' relationship to the people of Pakistan.

4. Considering a Security Guarantee

After India's nuclear tests in May 1998, the Clinton administration mounted an intense diplomatic campaign to dissuade Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from testing in response. Dispatching Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott to Pakistan and talking with Nawaz personally by telephone on four occasions, Clinton offered a massive U.S. aid program. He would find a way, he promised, to get around Pressler and other sanctions and deliver vast amounts of economic and military aid to Pakistan, including the long-embargoed F-16s. Nawaz replied that what he really needed from the United States in order to withstand heavy domestic pressure to test was a security guarantee against India. This Clinton would not provide, and Pakistan tested its nuclear capability soon afterward.^[53] Today, U.S. policy makers often ask what Pakistan's price might be to undertake difficult tasks like mounting a genuinely effective military campaign to seal the western border with Afghanistan or dismantling the Kashmir *jehadi* infrastructure along the Line of Control with India. The price quite likely is just such a security guarantee. Such a security guarantee need not be explicitly India-specific since this might have dire consequences for the U.S.–India relationship and other unintended consequences that might not be conducive to improving the prospects for peaceful resolution of Indo–Pak security issues. The guarantee could simply be made applicable to any external aggression directed against Pakistan, whether from the east or west. And it need not be given solely to Pakistan; a similar offer could and ought to be extended to India as well.

The cost to Pakistan of such a U.S. guarantee would not be cheap. It would have to be conditioned on Pakistan taking effective measures to completely dismantle the *jehadi* infrastructure in Azad Kashmir and any other part of Pakistan where it exists, genuinely crack down on and eliminate all extremist groups that now operate more or less freely under the name of charitable organizations, allow U.S. access to Azad Kashmir for the purpose of verification and monitoring, and put more emphasis on operations along its western border with Afghanistan.

These measures will not be popular in Pakistan, but their impact can be greatly ameliorated if the United States simultaneously puts discreet, behind-the-scenes diplomatic pressure on India to take bolder steps to reciprocate recent Pakistani flexibility on Kashmir. Finalizing an agreement that will permit both sides finally to withdraw from the Siachen Glacier is a good first step that might provide the confidence and impetus to resolve other long-festered border issues and conceivably allow both sides to withdraw a portion of their security forces from the Line of Control (LOC). Ratcheting down the tension (and force levels) along the LOC and Indian border would in turn permit Pakistan to concentrate more of its military resources on the western border with Afghanistan where the lack of capacity of its conventional forces to successfully prosecute a counter-insurgency campaign has long been a problem and the principal cause for its large casualties and poor operational results. Decreased tension with India could in turn provide the opportunity for Pakistan to divert a significant portion of its U.S.-provided security assistance money away from procuring high-technology systems more suited to large scale conventional war to those desperately required for a more effective counter-insurgency capability: helicopters, night vision devices, communications, and intelligence systems.

5. Enhancing Defense Relations at the Personal Level

Regardless of whether any of the above steps are taken, minor enhancements can be made to the present defense relationship. The person-to-person component of the relationship is still relatively small. Roughly only 200 Pakistanis are trained annually in the United States, and only three U.S. officers train annually in Pakistan. Ways must be found to increase the number and frequency of communication and interaction between the two militaries. This can be done either by sending more Americans to Pakistani military schools, sending American instructors to the faculties of those schools, or both. As a test case, there should be at least one American instructor placed on the faculty of the National Defence University and the Pakistan Army Command and Staff College. If this test is successful, other schools and other services can be added, possibly at the Pakistan Military Academy as a next step. Pakistan also has a Junior Commissioned Officers Academy located in Shinkari. Perhaps an instructor exchange or a staff

assistance visit can be worked out between that institution and the U.S. Army Non-Commissioned Officers Academy.

In past years, the U.S. Army Command and Staff College used to send a faculty briefing team to various countries in this region to provide briefings to military schools on various aspects of U.S. military doctrine. This has not been done for many years, but it could be restarted. Similarly, staff assistance visits can be made to assist Pakistani formations in disaster management planning, logistics, joint doctrine development, information management, and defense media relations.

Several of the U.S. armed services conduct personnel exchange programs with other countries. The U.S. Army, for example, has approximately 120 worldwide positions in which mid-grade officers are exchanged on a one-for-one basis with officers in other countries for one or two year tours of duty. Pakistan should be considered for this program. There are other shorter duration programs as well. The U.S. Pacific Command PALEX (Pacific Armies Look Exchange) establishes three-month exchanges for junior officers and non-commissioned officers in the ground forces of countries in its area of operations. This program might be considered for adoption by U.S. Central Command. Even shorter duration assignments, perhaps one month attachments, should also be worked out for Pakistani officers attending IMET courses in the United States and U.S. students attending courses in Pakistan.

6. Enhancing GWOT Coordination

Two requirements for a successful counter-insurgency strategy are good intelligence and a well-trained, highly mobile rapid reaction capability. The Pakistan Army has recently created a Corps of Military Intelligence to train and manage the relatively small number of officers assigned to intelligence tasks. The U.S. Army may be able to assist in the development of doctrine, training of instructors at the Pakistan Army Military intelligence School in Murree, and the identification of equipment and systems to improve tactical and human intelligence capabilities throughout the Pakistan Army. The Defense Intelligence Agency could also be utilized to establish an ongoing relationship with the Pakistan Army's Military Intelligence Directorate to mirror the long association that already exists between the CIA and the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate. The present level of tactical intelligence sharing might be improved by establishing joint intelligence fusion cells at CFC-A and 11 and 12 Corps headquarters to pass near-real time intelligence to rapid reaction forces on both sides of the border.

The United States can also help Pakistan improve its counter-insurgency capability by assisting in the raising, equipping, and training an airmobile brigade, one of the recommendations of a two-year old joint study of Pakistan's air assault capability by U.S. Central Command. Creating this capability will require Pakistan to dedicate a relatively small portion of its U.S. security assistance money and/or OEF reimbursement funding to purchase a fleet of light, medium, and heavy lift helicopters and other specialized equipment. Another of that study's recommendations that should be considered is enlarging ODRP so that it can provide on-the-ground training to such a force as well as assisting in training other Pakistan Army units in counter-insurgency doctrine and operations. Finally, the United States can assist in improving the combat capability of Pakistan's paramilitary Frontier Corps and provide counter-insurgency training to regular Army units operating in the FATA.

While I have placed the initial onus for enhancement on the United States side, an enhanced defense relationship with Pakistan inevitably must be a two-way street and nothing very substantial can be accomplished without the full cooperation of and reciprocity from the armed forces of Pakistan.

Conclusion

Pakistan and the United States need to bear in mind two salient facts: for the United States, Pakistan is the critical linchpin in the war on terrorism. Its geo-strategic location at the crossroads of Central Asia makes it an indispensable strategic partner now and well into the future. For Pakistan, at least in the foreseeable future, the United States cannot be replaced by China or any other combination of states as source of high technology military systems, economic assistance, and diplomatic power that can be brought to bear in an international crisis. There now exists an opportunity, perhaps for the first time, to build an enduring long-term relationship on facts rather than on fiction. Both governments have subscribed to the common objectives of curbing extremism and international terrorism, building sustainable democracy, preserving the domestic stability of Pakistan, and promoting the vision of a moderate progressive Pakistan as an alternative to more radical schools of thought in the Muslim world.

However, the two states have subscribed to common objectives in the past and yet been unable to sustain an enduring relationship because other issues, often unspoken and rarely if ever consciously addressed, poisoned the relationship and caused it eventually to collapse under the weight of its internal contradictions. The trust deficit, as the historical narrative demonstrates, is nothing new. It existed at the very beginning of the relationship and it exists today.

A retired Pakistani diplomat, Touqir Hussain, warns:

U.S. interests go well beyond the war on terrorism. By expending all of its political capital in securing Pakistan's cooperation in that war, the United States risks diminishing its leverage with Pakistan and neglecting other important strategic goals, such as promoting democracy in Pakistan and the Muslim world and containing nuclear proliferation....Fulfilling conflicting objectives without sacrificing any of them is a central policy dilemma for the United States.[\[54\]](#)

These and other controversial issues, if they cannot be completely resolved, must at least be consciously addressed and managed at the highest political and military levels if the ninth act in the ongoing U.S.–Pakistan drama is to have a positive conclusion.

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Colonel (ret) Smith is employed by BCP International Ltd as a Senior International Affairs Analyst where he advises a variety of government and commercial clients on South Asian issues. He is a regular participant and presenter on such issues at Washington-based think tanks such as the Henry M. Stimson Center, the Brookings Institution, the Heritage Foundation, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center.

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